

# LET'S MOVE!

AMERICA'S MOVE TO RAISE A HEALTHIER GENERATION OF KIDS

## Let's Move: Faith and Communities



As trusted community leaders, faith-based and neighborhood organizations are key partners in ending childhood obesity and hunger. You are in a position to share key information about childhood obesity and hunger with members of your community. You also have a unique opportunity to encourage engagement and action. The background and action steps below summarize some of the key opportunities for collaboration with **Let's Move!**

**The First Lady launched *Let's Move!* in February 2010. *Let's Move!* focuses on one ambitious goal: to solve the problem of childhood obesity within a generation, so that kids born today reach adulthood at a healthy weight.**

### Background

#### The Challenge of Childhood Obesity

##### Childhood obesity is a national problem:

- Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled.
- Nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese.
- Childhood obesity is associated with increased risk of asthma, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep problems and bullying.

##### Americans are consuming more calories than ever before:

- Food portions are two to five times bigger than they used to be.
- In total, we are now eating 31 percent more calories than we were 40 years ago—including 56 percent more fats and oils and 14 percent more sugars and sweeteners.
- The average American now eats 15 more pounds of sugar a year than in 1970.

##### Hunger is related to obesity:

- Nearly 17 million or 14.6% of children in the United States live in households that are food insecure. This means that at some point during the year, they simply did not get enough to eat.
- Often the foods that are least expensive have the least nutritional value and the highest calorie count.
- Low-income households often lack access to fresh produce, including farmers markets and community gardens. So, despite being hungry, many children also face the risk of obesity because they lack access to a balanced and nutritious diet.

##### Childhood obesity rates are higher in some communities:

- Among the African American community, 40% of children are overweight or obese and nearly one in two African American children is on track to get diabetes at some point in his or her life.
- Among the Hispanic population, nearly two in five Hispanic children are overweight or obese and half of Latino newborns born today will develop diabetes.
- In American Indian and Alaska Native communities, 39.5% of low-income children ages two to five are overweight or obese. A study found the rate of overweight and obesity to be higher in American Indian and Alaska Native children than in any other racial or ethnic group.

##### Childhood obesity isn't a stand-alone problem:

It's bound up in health care, education, economic opportunity, community development, and even our national security. **Let's Move!** engages and mobilizes every sector of our society, from elected officials and schools to moms and dads, to find solutions that work for communities and individuals. Faith- and community-based partners like you are critical to solving childhood obesity and hunger.



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## Action Steps

Here are a few great ways to get started.

*This is a menu of choices: you can pick and choose what will work best in your community!*

- **Start a conversation about childhood obesity by encouraging families in your community to make small, simple changes to their daily lives:** Families can add a side of fruit or veggies to every meal, drink more water and skim milk, go for family walks and get screened for obesity. At their next family checkup, they can ask the doctor to take each child's Body Mass Index. It's an easy way to understand if kids are at a healthy weight.
- **Grow a Garden:** Open up land at your house of worship or organization to community members and kids who may not have their own space to grow food. Kids want to eat what they grow.
- **Take the President's Challenge:** Help children get physically active by taking the President's Active Lifestyle Challenge and hosting the challenge within your organization. All you have to do to earn a President's Active Lifestyle Award (PALA) is be physically active for five days a week for six weeks! For more information, visit <http://www.presidentschallenge.org>.
- **Make community meals healthier:** At community or congregation potlucks or meals, provide healthy options, including fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Use smaller plates at events to encourage smaller portions. Studies show that using smaller plates reduces the amount of food people eat, which is a healthier choice and saves money. People do not usually notice differences in portion size and unknowingly eat a larger amount when presented with a larger portion. For more information on portion size, visit the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov> and check out the We Can! Educational Campaign.

- **Partner with a school:** Provide community access to your buildings and facilities to operate a Summer Food Service Program or afterschool program to ensure that children have access to healthy meals when school is out. For more information on the Summer Food Service Program, visit <http://www.summerfood.usda.gov>. For information on creating formal agreements for community access to your buildings and facilities (for any after-hours activities), visit <http://www.jointuse.org>.
- **Meet with community leaders:** As a trusted leader in your city or town, you have the potential to create change beyond your congregation or community group. Meet with your mayor, town administrator or town council member. Encourage them to sign up your municipality as a *Let's Move City or Town*. Learn more about the lasting policy changes *Let's Move Cities and Towns* are making by visiting <http://www.letsmove.gov/officials-step-1.php>.

The message is simple—it's the little changes in our daily and family lives that can make all the difference in preventing childhood obesity.

You can find more ideas for supporting **Let's Move!** and download the full version of the **Let's Move! Toolkit for Faith-based and Neighborhood Organizations** at <http://letsmove.gov>.

More tips for success are described in **Community Leaders:Take Action!**, available at [http://www.letsmove.gov/pdf/TAKE\\_ACTION\\_COMMUNITY\\_LEADERS.pdf](http://www.letsmove.gov/pdf/TAKE_ACTION_COMMUNITY_LEADERS.pdf).



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